Vacuum in Indo-Nepal relations

532. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the recent royal massacre and consequent changes in Government set up in Nepal have created a vacuum in Indo-Nepal relations; and

(b) if so, what steps Government are taking to fill up the vacuum so that the forces inimical to India may not be able to derive benefit therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) In an unprecedented tragedy, King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya of Nepal along with some other members of the Royal Family of Nepal were shot dead on June 1, 2001. Crown Prince Dipendra, who was involved in the shoot out, also succumbed to the injuries and died on June 4, 2001. The younger brother of the Late King, Prince Gyanendra was pronounced King by the Royal Council of Nepal and was enthroned on June 4, 2001.

Immediately after the unfortunate incident, Government of India released a statement which was read out by EAM on June 2. It stated that as a close neighbour and friend, India conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the mourning nation of the Kingdom of Nepal. A three day State mourning was also declared by the Government of India as a mark of respect on the occasion. On the same day, the Indian Cabinet passed a Resolution at a specially convened emergency meeting. The President conveyed his condolences to the new King. The Prime Minister sent letters of condolence to the Queen Mother and the then PM Girija Prasad Koirala. While expressing condolences, confidence has been expressed that friendship and co-operation would continue between the two countries in pursuit of peace and progress.

Existing bilateral mechanisms for interaction between the two countries continue to meet regularly. The Fourth Meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Working Group on Border Management was held on 28 and 29 June, 2001. Both sides reiterated their resolve for not allowing their territories to be used for activities prejudicial to the other. Both sides also resolved to curb terrorists activities across the India-Nepal border by strengthening existing mechanisms. The Commerce Secretaries are due to meet shortly.